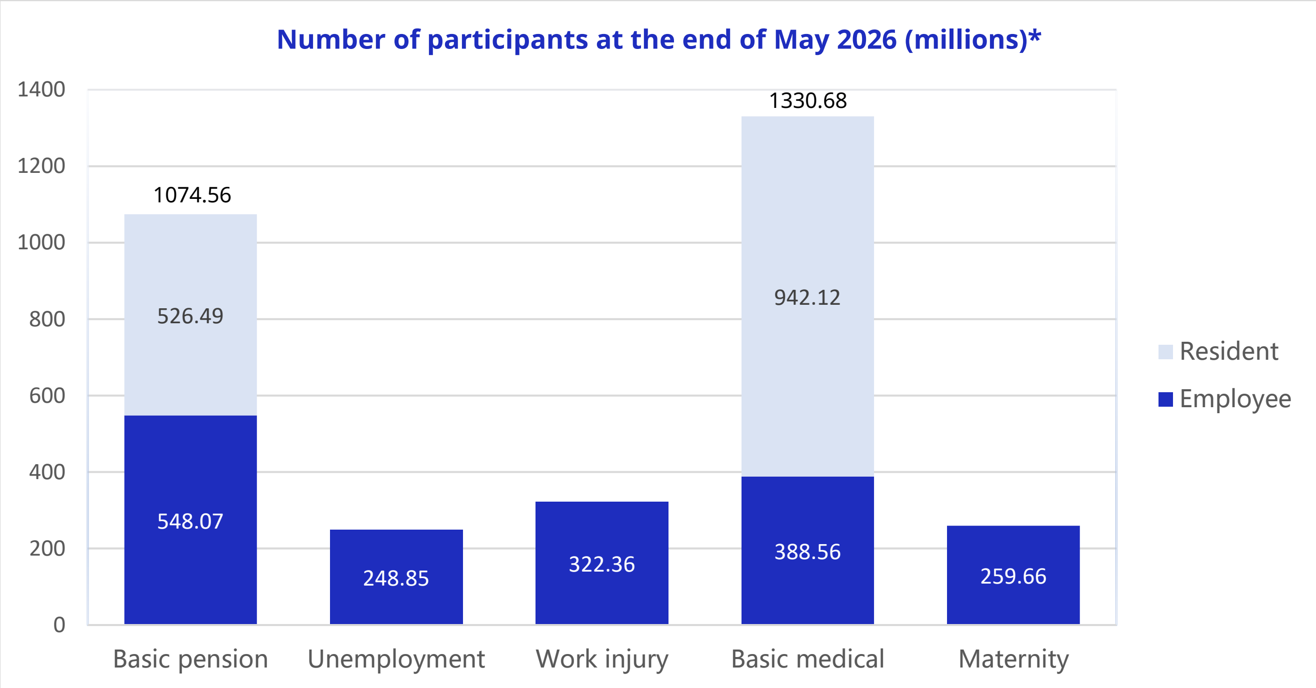
Quarterly Social Security Policy Monitor

Issue 25, April - June 2026

China social security barometer



Latest data available from MOHRSS, National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2026

* Basic medical and maternity insurance data statistics as of December 2025.

China social security policies

China adopts the Social Assistance Law

On 30 April 2026, China adopted the *Social Assistance Law (in Chinese)*, effective from 1 July 2026. The law establishes a tiered and categorized social assistance system, systematically defines eight categories of eligible beneficiaries and ten types of assistance measures, and clarifies the statutory responsibilities of relevant actors. The law expands the scope of social assistance beyond ensuring basic subsistence to also safeguarding basic needs, preventing risks, and promoting development. It broadens coverage and strengthens the role of social assistance as a safety net. The law also standardizes procedures for assistance delivery, improves access to services, supports social mobility, and promotes broader participation in social assistance through better coordination between government assistance programmes and non-governmental resources. Read more.

Employment-first strategy during the 15th Five-Year Plan period

On 17 June 2026, the State Council issued the *Plan for implementing the employment-first strategy during the 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-2030) (in Chinese)*, outlining the objectives, priorities, and policy measures for advancing the employment-first strategy and promoting high-quality and full employment during the 15th Five-Year Plan period. Among the measures relevant to social security are accelerating the development of a multi-tier, multi-pillar pension system, expanding coverage of unemployment and work injury insurance, and increasing participation among workers in flexible employment, migrant workers, and those engaged in new forms of employment. The plan also supports the development of flexible and emerging forms of employment, strengthens public services, and safeguards workers' rights. It establishes ten key indicators, including urban job creation, the surveyed urban unemployment rate, labour productivity, the share of skilled workers, and coverage of pension, medical, unemployment, and work injury insurance. Read more.

China continues unemployment insurance measures to support employment retention and job creation

On 18 June 2026, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security (MOHRSS) and three other ministries jointly issued a notice (in Chinese), extending unemployment insurance measures throughout 2026. The measures continue employment retention rebates and one-off hiring subsidies while enhancing skills upgrading subsidies to help enterprises retain and create jobs and support workers in upgrading their skills. It also expands user-friendly services, including automatic benefit delivery for eligible recipient, strengthens fund risk management, and prioritizes the payment of basic unemployment insurance benefits. Read more.

Occupational injury protection pilot expanded nationwide

The occupational injury protection pilot programme for workers in new forms of employment was launched on 1 July 2022. By the end of June 2026, cumulative participation had reached 29.9 million. From 1 July 2026, the programme was expanded nationwide. Provincial authorities will progressively extend coverage to small and medium-sized platform enterprises in the ride-hailing, instant delivery, and urban freight sectors, bringing eligible enterprises into the scheme as implementation conditions permit. Read more.

China issues first regulation protecting older workers

On 25 May 2026, the MOHRSS and four other departments issued the *Interim Provisions on the Protection of the Basic Rights and Interests of Older Workers (in Chinese)*, effective from 1 July 2026. This is China's first dedicated regulation safeguarding the rights of workers above the statutory retirement age. The provisions cover remuneration, rest and leave, occupational safety and health, and work injury protection. Employers are required to enrol older workers in work injury insurance and pay the required contributions. Older workers who need to extend their contribution period may continue contributing to pension insurance individually. By mutual agreement, employers may also make pension insurance contributions on behalf of these workers, with the worker's share deducted and remitted by the employer. Read more.

China moves to provide basic public services based on place of residence

On 22 May 2026, the State Council issued guidelines (in Chinese) on providing basic public services based on place of residence, enabling residents without local household registration to enjoy the same access to basic public services as registered residents. Among the social security-related measures are improving access to employee social insurances at the place of employment, exploring measures to expand pension insurance coverage among workers in flexible employment, and strengthening residence-based access to basic medical insurance, including for residence permit holders. Read more.

Second reading of the draft Medical Security Law

On 27 April 2026, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress conducted the second reading of the draft *Medical Security Law*. The revised draft clarifies requirements for a multi-tier medical security system, strengthens coordination across healthcare services, medical insurance and pharmaceuticals, advances provincial-level pooling of basic medical insurance, improves mechanisms for sustained insurance coverage, strengthens maternity insurance and expands its coverage, and enhances the management and oversight of medical insurance funds. Read more (in Chinese).

China strengthens services and management for workers in new forms of employment

In April 2026, China issued *the Opinions on Strengthening Services and Management for Workers in New Forms of Employment (in Chinese)*, setting out phased development objectives. The policy aims to extend public services and social security coverage to workers in new forms of employment. It strengthens arrangements for social insurance portability, occupational injury protection, cross-regional settlement of medical expenses, housing provident funds, vocational training, social assistance, and mental health services, thereby improving both social protection and access to public services. The policy also brings together previously fragmented measures into a more coherent framework, providing stronger institutional support for this rapidly growing workforce. Read more.

China promotes integrated urban-rural employment policies through five key measures

On 30 March 2026, the MOHRSS, together with two other departments, issued the *Opinions on Coordinating Urban and Rural Employment Policy Systems (in Chinese)*. The document sets out five policy measures aimed at fostering a more integrated urban-rural labour market through greater two-way labour mobility and connectivity, while promoting high-quality, full employment for both urban and rural workers. Among the measures related to social security, the policy calls for gradually increasing basic pension benefits for urban and rural residents, and exploring social insurance policies that support urban-rural integration. It also seeks to expand participation in employee pension insurance among rural migrant workers, improve the portability of social insurance benefits, and enhance the national social security service platform. Read more.

Local policies and practices in China

Multiple provinces issue long-term care insurance implementation plans

At the end of March 2026, China issued the *Opinions on Accelerating the Establishment of a Long-Term Care Insurance System (in Chinese)*. As the “sixth social insurance” following China’s five major social insurance programs, long-term care insurance (LTCI) has moved from localized pilot programs toward a nationally unified system. Designed to address the growing care needs associated with disability and population ageing, the system has entered a three-year accelerated implementation phase. To date, multiple provinces have issued LTCI implementation plans, including Fujian, Shanxi, Jilin, Qinghai, Liaoning, Jiangxi, Hebei, Hainan, Yunnan, Sichuan, and Shandong. Read more (in Chinese).

Anhui, Fujian, and Hunan enhance maternity insurance benefits

Anhui, Fujian, and Hunan have recently introduced policies to enhance maternity insurance benefits. The three provinces aim to reduce the cost of childbirth and strengthen maternity support. Their policies increase coverage of maternity-related medical expenses, strengthen reimbursement for inpatient delivery costs, include labour analgesia in medical insurance coverage, and improve claims administration and direct settlement arrangements.

The provinces have adopted different approaches. *Fujian* combines enhanced medical insurance benefits with government subsidies, aiming to eliminate out-of-pocket childbirth expenses within the policy scope. *Anhui* focuses on expanding and strengthening maternity insurance by extending coverage to workers in flexible and new forms of employment, standardizing prenatal care benefits, improving maternity allowances, and providing full coverage of eligible inpatient delivery expenses within prescribed limits. *Hunan* has centred its reform on achieving "zero out-of-pocket childbirth" by fully covering eligible delivery expenses for both employee and resident medical insurance participants and introducing bundled payment arrangements with designated healthcare providers.

International highlight

ILO adopts first Convention on decent work in the platform economy

On 12 June 2026, the International Labour Conference adopted *Convention concerning decent work in the platform economy (No.193)*, establishing the first international labour standard aimed at improving working conditions for millions of people who earn their living through digital labour platforms worldwide. The Convention extends key protections to platform workers regardless of their employment status, including fundamental rights at work (freedom of association and collective bargaining, protection from discrimination, child labour and forced labour, and the right to a safe and healthy working environment), protection against unfair employment termination or account deactivation, fair remuneration, social protection, and data privacy. It also introduces safeguards for the responsible use of automated systems and algorithms, including requirements for transparency and access to review mechanisms for automated decisions. Read more.

EU and Member States social security policies

EU advances reform of social security coordination rules

On 29 April 2026, EU Member States approved an agreement between the Council Presidency and the European Parliament on the *revision of EU's social security coordination rules*, marking a significant step toward fair labour mobility and modernising cross-border social security arrangements in the EU. The reform introduces new requirements for posted workers, including a minimum three-month social security affiliation period before posting and stricter rules on consecutive postings. It also enhances coordination of unemployment, family and long-term care benefits, clarifies which country's social security legislation applies in cross-border situations, and strengthens cooperation between national authorities to combat fraud and reduce administrative burdens and legal uncertainty for companies that operate cross-borders. The revised rules aim to facilitate labour mobility while better protecting the social security rights of people who work, live or retire in other EU Member States. The agreement still requires formal approval by the European Parliament and the Council of the EU before entering into force. Read more.

European Commission adopts first EU Anti-Poverty Strategy

On 6 May 2026, the European Commission adopted the first-ever EU Anti-Poverty Strategy, establishing a roadmap to reduce the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion by at least 15 million by 2030 and to help eradicate poverty by 2050. The strategy focuses on improving access to quality employment, adequate income support, and essential services, while addressing key drivers of poverty such as housing exclusion, child poverty, and labour market exclusion. It is accompanied by measures to strengthen the European Child Guarantee and a proposal to tackle housing exclusion, as well as initiatives to enhance coordination among Member States and involve social partners, civil society, the private sector, and people with lived experience of poverty in policy design. Read more.

Council agrees position on increasing the appeal of the pan-European personal pension product (PEPP)

On 24 June 2026, the Council of the EU agreed its negotiating position on proposed revisions to the rules governing the pan-European personal pension product (PEPP), with the aim of making the PEPP a more attractive, accessible and simple option for savers. It will remove some existing requirements and design features that have hampered PEPP’s take-up, while continuing to ensure a high level of consumer protection. PEPP is an EU-wide voluntary personal pension product, established in 2019, that can complement existing public and occupational pension systems, as well as national private pension schemes. Read more.

Belgium approves wage indexation and pension reforms

In May 2026, Belgium's Parliament approved budget measures that modify the country's automatic wage indexation system and introduce pension reforms. Under the new rules, full indexation will apply to the first €4,000 of monthly gross wages, while salary amounts above that threshold will receive a reduced index increase. Parliament also approved pension reforms, effective from 2027, introducing pension reductions for certain early retirees who do not meet new career requirements and pension bonuses for those who work beyond the statutory retirement age. The reforms aim to improve the long-term sustainability of Belgium's pension system. Read more.

Cyprus targets major pension reform from 2027

In June 2026, Cyprus announced plans to implement a pension reform package from January 2027. The proposals aim to strengthen minimum pensions, modernise the investment strategy of its Social Insurance Fund and improve the long-term sustainability of the system. The first phase of the reform will focus on the first pillar of the pension system, the Social Insurance Fund. The government also plans to gradually strengthen the second-pillar pension system. The reform is being developed through tripartite social dialogue involving government, employers and trade unions and is supported by an actuarial study. Read more.

Finland proposes reform of self-employed pension scheme

In April 2026, Finland outlined plans to reform the self-employed pension scheme, aiming to improve conditions for entrepreneurship and make starting a business more attractive. Under the proposals, from 2028, self-employed individuals would be able to choose between using their taxable earned income or the current imputed confirmed income model as the basis for pension contributions, subject to a minimum earnings-related threshold. The reform would also introduce greater flexibility, allowing contributions to be paused during periods when sickness allowance is paid. The government estimates that contributions would decrease for nearly 40% of self-employed workers, remain unchanged for over 40%, and increase for around 20%. Read more.

France adopts bill expanding project owners' social liability

On 11 May 2026, France's Parliament adopted a bill to strengthen the fight against undeclared work and social security fraud by extending the duty of vigilance of project owners and contracting authorities across the entire subcontracting chain. Previously, they were generally required to verify compliance only by their direct contractors. Under the new rules, they may face broader liability for unpaid wages, taxes, and social security contributions linked to non-compliant lower-tier subcontractors, increasing compliance obligations for businesses that rely on subcontracting. Read more.

Germany approves a new basic security scheme for jobseekers

In March 2026, Germany approved a reform of the current social assistance system, the Bürgergeld scheme, paving the way for the introduction of a new basic security scheme for jobseekers (Grundsicherung für Arbeitssuchende), effective from 1 July 2026. The reform aims to focus the existing system more strongly on labour market integration, based on the principle of encouraging and supporting and a closer link between support and personal responsibility. At the heart of the reform is a greater emphasis on job placement. It introduces a stronger obligation for beneficiaries to actively cooperate in their integration into the labour market, as well as tougher sanctions for non-compliance with job-search and participation obligations. The reform aims to strengthen work incentives and accelerate beneficiaries' return to employment. Read more.

Ireland publishes Social Welfare and Other Matters Bill 2026

In April 2026, Ireland published the *General Scheme of the Social Welfare and Other Matters Bill 2026*, setting out proposed reforms to social welfare legislation. The Bill would remove the provision allowing claimants under age 55 who receive redundancy payments exceeding €50,000 to be disqualified from receiving Jobseeker's Benefit for up to nine weeks, reflecting the introduction of Jobseeker's Pay-Related Benefit in 2025. It would also place the revised *Code of Practice on Determining Employment Status* on a statutory footing and require deciding officers to consider it when determining whether the person is employed or self-employed for Pay Related Social Insurance purposes. Read more.

Italy strengthens protections for platform workers

Italy's *Decree-Law No. 62/2026*, in force since 1 May 2026, introduces new safeguards for platform workers, including a rebuttable employment presumption where platforms exercise algorithmic control over work. The decree also strengthens transparency requirements for algorithmic management and grants workers the right to request human review of automated decisions. While several provisions align with the EU Platform Work Directive, further legislation will be needed for full transposition. Read more.

Norway reforms guaranteed pension products to improve returns

In April 2026, Norway's Parliament approved legislative changes allowing providers of guaranteed pension products (*fripoliser*) to adopt more flexible investment strategies while maintaining guaranteed benefits. The reform introduces the use of "borrowed equity" to increase risk-bearing capacity, revises buffer fund rules, and allows investment-choice arrangements to continue during the payout phase. The measures are intended to support more efficient management of pension capital and improve long-term returns for policyholders while safeguarding guaranteed benefits. Read more.

Spain approves flexible retirement reform

In May 2026, Spain adopted *Royal Decree 416/2026*, reforming its flexible retirement regime. The reform extends flexible retirement to eligible pensioners undertaking self-employment, provided they were not registered as self-employed during the three years preceding retirement. It also broadens the scope of compatible work by revising the permitted part-time working-hours range from 25–75% to 33–80% of full-time hours. The reform aims to encourage active ageing and support a gradual transition from employment to retirement. The new rules will enter into force on 28 August 2026. Read more.

Sweden introduces a target retirement age of 67

Sweden has implemented a new target retirement age (riktålder) of 67 from 1 January 2026, linking key pension eligibility ages to life expectancy. Under the reform, income and premium pensions can generally be claimed three years before the target age, while guarantee pensions and certain other pension benefits become available at the target age. The measure aims to maintain pension adequacy and improve the long-term sustainability of the pension system as life expectancy increases. Future adjustments to the target retirement age will be made gradually based on demographic developments. Read more.

Social security policies in other countries

Indonesia expands digital social protection trial

Indonesia is expanding trials of its digital social protection platform, known as Perlinsos, to 42 cities and districts from June 2026, significantly broadening efforts to modernise welfare administration through integrated digital public infrastructure. By linking administrative and population data across agencies, the government aims to improve the accuracy and accessibility of social assistance programmes for millions of residents. Read more.

Japan expands iDeCo pension scheme

Japan's pension reform expands the individual defined contribution pension scheme (iDeCo) by extending eligibility from age 65 to 70 and increasing contribution limits from December 2026. It also raised the working pension threshold for working retirees in April 2026, allowing more older workers to combine work and pension income without benefit cuts. The reforms aim to encourage longer working lives and strengthen retirement savings. Read more.

The Republic of Korea reforms National Pension to improve long-term sustainability

The Republic of Korea is implementing reforms to strengthen the long-term sustainability and adequacy of its National Pension system, with the changes taking effect from 1 January 2026. The reform gradually increases contribution rates while raising the pension income replacement rate from 40% to 43%. It also expands childbirth pension credits by granting credit from the first child and removing previous cap on total creditable period, allowing credited pension periods to increase in proportion to the number of children. The measures are intended to address demographic pressures, improve retirement income adequacy, and improve the long-term financial outlook of the pension system. Read more.

Chinese academic insights

ZHENG Gongcheng[1]: How can investment in people deliver results in social security and basic public services?

"Investment in people" has emerged as a key policy priority for the 15th Five-Year Plan period. At its core, it involves increasing public investment, improving institutional arrangements and resource allocation, strengthening social protection, and promoting more equitable access to basic public services. While China's social security system has made significant progress, further efforts are needed to improve equity and sustainability, strengthen support for vulnerable groups and less-developed regions, and expand education, healthcare, elderly care, and childcare services. These measures can help boost consumption, promote common prosperity, and support high-quality development. Read more (in Chinese).

XI Heng[2]: Systemic risks in social security amid profound global transformations and effective responses

Population ageing, economic transformation, and social change are increasing pressures on the resilience of China's social security system. Risks related to institutional stability, fund sustainability, administrative effectiveness, and public confidence require greater attention. Strengthening coordination between social security, economic development, and social governance, while balancing investment in people and physical infrastructure, will be essential to enhancing system resilience and supporting livelihoods, economic development, and social cohesion. Read more (in Chinese).

ZHU Jianhua[3]: Strengthening risk prevention to promote high-quality social assistance development

The *Social Assistance Law* places greater emphasis on risk prevention, shifting social assistance from reactive relief to the proactive prevention and mitigation of livelihood risks. Key measures include dynamic monitoring and early warning systems, tiered assistance, rapid response mechanisms, and stronger coordination across social protection programmes. Broader participation by non-governmental actors is also expected to strengthen system resilience and coverage, providing stronger support for vulnerable groups and common prosperity. Read more (in Chinese).

ZHENG Wei[4]: Population ageing and sustainability risks in the basic pension insurance system

China's basic pension insurance system faces growing sustainability challenges, including a declining contributor-to-retiree ratio in the employee pension scheme, a shrinking share of contributors in the resident pension scheme, and rising expenditure pressures. If left unaddressed, these trends could undermine income security for older persons, weaken public confidence in the pension system, and increase intergenerational tensions. Key recommendations include strengthening actuarial analysis, improving pension financing and benefit adjustment mechanisms, enhancing the resident pension scheme, increasing participation among workers in flexible employment, and drawing on the National Social Security Fund when needed. Read more (in Chinese).

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[3] Vice President of the Social Assistance Branch of the China Association of Social Security and Professor at the School of Public Administration, Zhejiang University of Technology
[4] Lloyd's Chair Professor, School of Economics, Peking University

PENG Haoran[5]: Improving pension protection for low-benefit groups

During the 15th Five-Year Plan period, pension adjustments should give greater support to low-benefit groups to promote common prosperity, boost consumption, and enhance social equity. These groups mainly include participants in the resident pension scheme and some retirees covered by the employee pension scheme. Measures to improve pension adequacy include increasing flat-rate benefit adjustments, refining benefit-linked adjustment mechanisms, and providing greater support for older pensioners with low benefits. Pension sustainability can be strengthened through gradually raising the retirement age, increasing minimum contribution periods, improving fund investment, and enhancing redistribution, thereby creating greater scope for improving benefits for lower-benefit pensioners. Read more (in Chinese).

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International Social Security Association Monitor

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